

## Sūrah 'Abas

### (Frowning)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 42 verses and 1 section.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

#### Verses 1 - 42

عَبَسَ وَتَوَلَّى ﴿١﴾ أَنْ جَاءَهُ الْأَعْمَى ﴿٢﴾ وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّهُ يَزَّكَّى ﴿٣﴾  
 أَوْ يَذَّكَّرُ فَتَنْفَعَهُ الذِّكْرَى ﴿٤﴾ أَمَّا مَنِ اسْتَغْنَى ﴿٥﴾ فَإِنَّ لَهُ  
 تَصَدَّى ﴿٦﴾ وَمَا عَلَيْكَ أَلَّا يَزَّكَّى ﴿٧﴾ وَأَمَّا مَنِ جَاءَكَ يَسْعَى ﴿٨﴾  
 وَهُوَ يَخْشَى ﴿٩﴾ فَإِنَّ عَنْهُ تَلَهَّى ﴿١٠﴾ كَلَّا إِنَّهَا تَذْكِرَةٌ ﴿١١﴾  
 فَمَنْ شَاءَ ذَكَرْهُ ﴿١٢﴾ فِي صُحُفٍ مُكَرَّمَةٍ ﴿١٣﴾ مَرْفُوعَةٍ مُطَهَّرَةٍ ﴿١٤﴾  
 بِأَيْدِي سَفَرَةٍ ﴿١٥﴾ كِرَامٍ بَرَرَةٍ ﴿١٦﴾ قَتَلَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا اكْفَرَ ﴿١٧﴾  
 مِنْ آيِ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ ﴿١٨﴾ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ خَلَقَهُ فَقَدَرَهُ ﴿١٩﴾ ثُمَّ  
 السَّبِيلَ يَسْرَهُ ﴿٢٠﴾ ثُمَّ أَمَاتَهُ فَأَقْبَرَهُ ﴿٢١﴾ ثُمَّ إِذَا شَاءَ أَنْشَرَهُ ﴿٢٢﴾  
 كَلَّا لَمَّا يَقْضِ مَا أَمَرَهُ ﴿٢٣﴾ فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ إِلَى طَعَامِهِ ﴿٢٤﴾  
 أَنَّا صَبَبْنَا الْمَاءَ صَبًّا ﴿٢٥﴾ ثُمَّ شَقَقْنَا الْأَرْضَ شَقًّا ﴿٢٦﴾ فَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا  
 حَبًّا ﴿٢٧﴾ وَعَبَا وَقَضْبًا ﴿٢٨﴾ وَزَيْتُونًا وَنَخْلًا ﴿٢٩﴾ وَحَدَائِقِ غُلْبًا ﴿٣٠﴾  
 وَفَاكِهَةً وَأَبًّا ﴿٣١﴾ مَتَاعًا لَكُمْ وَلِأَنْعَامِكُمْ ﴿٣٢﴾ فَإِذَا جَاءَتِ  
 الصَّاحَةُ ﴿٣٣﴾ يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَأُمِّهِ وَأَبِيهِ ﴿٣٥﴾

وَصَاحِبَتِهِ وَبَيْنِهِ ﴿٣٦﴾ لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ شَأْنٌ يُغْنِيهِ  
 ﴿٣٧﴾ وَجُودٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُّسْفِرَةٌ ﴿٣٨﴾ ضَاحِكَةٌ مُّسْتَبْشِرَةٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَوُجُودٌ  
 يَوْمَئِذٍ عَلَيْهَا غَبَرَةٌ ﴿٤٠﴾ تَرْهَقُهَا قَتَرَةٌ ﴿٤١﴾ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرَةُ  
 الْفَجَرَةُ ﴿٤٢﴾

He (the Holy Prophet ﷺ) frowned and turned his face, [1] because the blind man came to him! [2] And what could tell you (O Holy Prophet about the prospects of the blind man?) May be, (if you had attended him properly,) he would have attained purity, [3] or have taken to the advice, and the advice would have benefited him. [4] As for the one who does not care (about faith), [5] you are anxious to pursue him, [6] while there is no blame on you, if he does not attain purity. [7] As regards the one who has come to you rushing eagerly, [8] while he fears (Allah), [9] to him you pay no heed! [10]

Never! (you should never act in this way,) Indeed this (Qur'an) is an advice. [11] So, whoever so wills, let him remember it. [12] It is (recorded) in those scripts (of the Preserved Tablet) that are honoured, [13] exalted, purified, [14] in the hands of those scribes [15] who are honourable, righteous. [16]

Death be unto the man! How ungrateful he is! [17] From which stuff did He (Allah) create him? [18] From a drop of semen! He created him, and designed him in due proportion, [19] then He made the way easy for him, [20] Later, he made him die, and put him into the grave, [21] thereafter, when He will intend, He will raise him up. [22] No! He has not yet fulfilled what He (Allah) had commanded him. [23]

So, let the man look to his food, [24] how well We poured water, [25] then how nicely We split the earth, [26] then We grew in it grain, [27] and grapes and greens, [28] and olive and date-palms, [29] and gardens, full of thick trees, [30] and fruits and fodder, [31] as a benefit for you and your cattle. [32]

So when there will come the Deafening Noise, [33] the Day when one will flee from his brother, [34] and from his mother and father, [35] and from his wife and sons, [36] every one of them will have enough concern to make

him careless of others. [37] Many faces, on that day, will be bright, [38] laughing, rejoicing, [39] and many faces, on that day, will be stained with dust, [40] covered by darkness. [41] Those are the disbelievers, the nefarious. [42]

## Commentary

### Circumstance of Revelation

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Umm Maktūm ؓ, the companion of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was a blind man. It once happened that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was engaged in a talk with the leaders of Quraish about some matters of belief. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Umm Maktūm ؓ arrived there. Imam Baghawi adds that being blind and unable to see the surroundings, he did not realise that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was occupied with the others. He, therefore, burst into the circle and called the Holy Prophet ﷺ repeatedly. [Maẓharī]. According to Ibn Kathīr, he requested the Holy Prophet ﷺ to teach him a verse of the Qur'ān and insisted an immediate enlightenment on the question. On that occasion, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was occupied with the non-believing leaders of Makkah in the hope that they would embrace the faith of Islam. The leaders to whom the Holy Prophet ﷺ was speaking were 'Utbah Ibn Rabī'ah, Abū Jahl Ibn Hishām and the Holy Prophet's ؓ uncle 'Abbās ؓ [who had until then not embraced the Islamic faith].

The Holy Prophet ﷺ disliked the intrusion, and showed his displeasure by turning aside from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Umm Maktūm, thinking that he was a committed Muslim who frequently visited him, and therefore he could speak to him at another appropriate time. There was no religious loss in postponing the response to him. On the other hand, the Quraish leaders neither frequented the Holy Prophet's ؓ company, nor could the Word of Allah be conveyed to them at any time. At that particular moment, they were listening to the Holy Prophet's ؓ discourse and there was hope that they would embrace the Islamic faith. But if the conversation was rashly interrupted, apparently they would have been deprived of the faith. In view of this situation, the Holy Prophet ﷺ showed adverse reaction by turning aside from 'Abdullāh Ibn umm Maktūm ؓ, and continued his discourse with the Quraish leaders. When the assembly broke up, the verses of Sūrah 'Abas were revealed to record Allah's dislike for this attitude, and to give directions for future.

This attitude of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was based on *ijtihad* or 'an

opinion based on personal reasoning'. He thought that if a Muslim were to adopt a speech style that is not in keeping with etiquettes of a gathering, he needs to be reprimanded, so that in future he may be careful in future. That is the reason why Holy Prophet ﷺ turned his face away from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Umm Maktūm ؓ. Secondly, disbelief (*kufr*) and polytheism (*shirk*) are the most severe sins, and an effort to eradicate them should take priority over the subsidiary precepts of Islam on which Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Umm Maktūm ؓ asked for enlightenment. Allah Almighty, through this Surah, did not confirm the correctness of this *ijtihad* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and explained to him that educating a genuine seeker will most certainly benefit him, while the benefit of discussion with the opponents (who disdainfully turn away their face when the Holy Prophet ﷺ talks to them) is shaky and doubtful. Doubtful thing cannot be preferred over certainty. As for the violation of etiquette committed by Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn Umm Maktūm, its excuse is pointed out by the Holy Qur'ān in the word 'blind'. It is indicated by this word that being a blind man, he could not see what the Holy Prophet ﷺ was doing and with whom he was engaged in conversation. Thus he was excusable, and was not liable to be subjected to aversion. This indicates that if an excusable person were to break any rule of etiquette unwittingly, he should not be reprimanded.

عَبَسَ وَتَوَلَّى (He [the Holy Prophet ﷺ] frowned and turned his face, 80:1). The word '*abasa*' means 'he frowned' and the word '*tawallā*' means 'he turned aside'. Since the reference here is to the Holy Prophet ﷺ who himself is addressed, the verbs should have been in the second person: 'you frowned and you turned aside'. But the Holy Qur'ān on this occasion uses the third person in order to maintain the honour of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, as if this attitude were shown by some other person, and in a subtle way it alludes to the point that what the Holy Prophet ﷺ did was not befitting his high status. Then the next sentence وَمَا يَذْرَئُكَ (and what could tell you? ...80:3) alludes to the fact that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was excusable, because it did not come to his attention that the Companion is asking something whose effect will be certain and the effect of conversation with others is dubious. The second sentence abandons the third person, and switches to the second person in order to maintain the

honour of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Had he not been addressed in second person at all, it might have created the impression that he is not addressed directly because of his unapproved conduct, which would have been an unbearable pain and grief for the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Just as the third person in the first statement is meant to show respect to him, the second person in the following sentence is also meant to honor and console him.

لَعَلَّهٗ يَرْحَمَہٗ اَوْ يَذَّكَّرُ فَتَنْفَعُہُ الذِّکْرٰی (May be, [if you had attended him properly,] he would have attained purity, or have taken to the advice, and the advice would have benefited him....80:4).

In other words, because Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Umm Maktūm ؓ was a genuine believer, any advice given to him would have benefited him and served to purify him. The companion sought enlightenment and its benefit was certain. If the Holy Prophet ﷺ enlightened him on the topic, he would have purified himself and attained perfection. If that did not happen, he would have at least attained the basic benefit of Divine remembrance. He would have improved the love and fear of Allah in his heart. The word *dhikrā* means 'to remember Allah abundantly' [Ṣiḥāḥ].<sup>(1)</sup>

On this occasion, the Qur'ān has used two sentences *yazzakkā* and *yazzakkaru*. The first statement signifies 'to be purified' and the second statement signifies 'he may take heed and the reminder may benefit him'. The first stage is that of the 'righteous' who cleanse their inner and outer selves. The second stage is that of *mubtadī* 'beginners on the spiritual journey'. At this stage, the beginner is reminded of Allah which enhances the greatness and awe of Allah in his heart. The two sentences are disjoined by disjunctive particles *au* (or) and technically they are not necessarily exclusive to one another. The sense is that 'Abdullāh Ibn Umm Maktūm ؓ would have attained either both benefits, or at least, the second one, that is, increase in Allah's remembrance and in His awe, which is the initial step towards perfection [Maẓharī]

### An Important Qur'ānic Principle of Teaching and Preaching

On this occasion, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was faced with two different

(1) This interpretation is based on taking the word '*dhikrā*' in the sense of remembrance of Allah'. However, some other exegetes have taken this word to mean 'advice', and the translation of the text, as well as the explanation following in the next paragraph, is based on it. (Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī)

requirements at the same time. On the one hand, he was required to teach a Muslim and to encourage him on attaining perfection. On the other hand, he had to provide guidance to non-Muslims. The principle laid down here makes it clear that the first requirement takes priority over the second one. It is improper to delay the first task (educating Muslims) because of the second task. This indicates that education of Muslims and their reform are more important than, and take priority over, getting the non-Muslims to embrace the faith.

Scholars should avoid any such indulgence when disposing of any doubts of the non-Muslims, which may create doubts or complaints in the minds of the general body of Muslims. The teachers, preachers and reformers need to keep in mind these Qurānic guidelines to maintain the welfare and priority of the Muslims. How beautifully Akbar Allahabadi, the Urdu poet, versifies this principle:

بے وفا سمجھیں تمہیں اہل حرم اس سے بچو..... ذیروالے کج ادا کہدیں یہ بدنامی بھلی

'Protect yourselves from a position where people of the Hāram (Muslims) call you unfaithful.

As opposed to this, if People of temple [non-Muslims] call you 'ill-mannered', (because of your faithfulness to your religion), this dishonor is better.

The following verses clarify the principles more elaborately:

أَمَّا مَنِ اسْتَغْنَىٰ فَأَنَّىٰ لَهُ تَصَدَّىٰ (As for the one who does not care [about faith], you are anxious to pursue him!...80:6).

In other words: "Those who turn away from you and your religion, you are pursuing them under the hope that some how they should become Muslims, while this is not your responsibility. If they do not embrace the faith, there will be no blame on you.

Thereafter, in verses 13 and 14, Allah Almighty has described the high status of the Holy Qur'ān, thus:

فِي صُحُفٍ مُّكَرَّمَةٍ مَّرْفُوعَةٍ مُّطَهَّرَةٍ (It is [recorded] in those scripts [of the Preserved Tablet] that are honoured, [13] exalted, purified - 14).

The word *ṣuḥuf* refers to *lauḥ mahfūẓ* 'the Preserved Tablet'.

Although it is a single thing, but *ṣuḥuf*, the plural form of *ṣaḥīfah* is used because all divine scriptures are written in it, or because the angels copy their scriptures from them. The word *marfū'ah* means 'exalted in the sight of Allah'. The word *muṭahharah* (purified) means 'people in the state of sexual defilement, menstrual discharge, post-natal bleeding and people in the state of minor uncleanness are not permitted to touch it'.

بِأَيْدِي سَفَرَةٍ. كِرَامٍ بَرَرَةٍ (in the hands of those scribes who are honourable, righteous. [80:15-16] )

The word *safarah*, with *fathah* [=a+a] on the first two letters, may be the plural of *safir* which means a 'scribe'. In this case, it would refer to the recording angels, or to the Prophets عليهم السلام and those of their aides who write down the revelation. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ and Mujāhid hold this view.

The word *safarah* may be used as the plural of *safir* in the sense of 'envoy'. In this case, it would refer to the angels who convey the revelation, and Prophets عليهم السلام and their companions who write the revelation. The 'ulama' (knowledgeable persons) of the Muslim community' are also included in this term, because they too are envoys between the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Muslim community. The messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said that he who recites the Qurān and is an expert in the art of recitation, he will be with the honorable, righteous envoys. He who is not an expert in the art of recitation, but recites it correctly with difficulty, he shall receive double reward. [Transmitted by Shaikhain from 'Ā'ishah - Mazharī]. This shows that a non-expert will receive double reward - one for recitation of Qurān, and the other for bearing the difficulty. This also indicates that an expert will receive countless rewards. [Mazharī]

The preceding verses mentioned that the Qurān is exalted and that belief in it is incumbent. Subsequently, the rejecters of Qurān are cursed and they are warned against showing ingratitude towards Divine favours. That the Holy Qur'an is a great Divine blessing is understood only by the men of Divine knowledge and understanding. Further, there is the mention of those Divine favours that Allah confers on man since his inception to the end of his life. These are material and physical things

that a man with basic intellect can understand. Human creation is mentioned, thus:

مِنْ أَىِّ شَىْءٍ خَلَقَهُ. مِنْ نَظْطَةٍ (From which stuff did He [Allah] create him? From a drop of semen! ..80:18-19).

First a question is raised: 'O man! Consider what Allah has created you from?' Since its reply is so obvious that there can be no other reply, the next verse itself says: 'From a drop of semen!' Thus the verse draws pointed attention to the very humble beginning of man, so that it may be brought home to him that Allah having created him from such an insignificant thing as a sperm-drop, created him and proportioned him:

خَلَقَهُ، فَقَدَرَهُ (He created him, and designed him in due proportion..80:19). In other words, He has made him with a special design and with great wisdom. His stature, body-structure, his face, his length and breadth of the limbs, his joints, his eyes, nose and ears are all well-proportioned in their creation. If any limb or organ loses its proportion, man's face will go awry, and every activity will become a problem.

The word *qaddara* is derived from *taqdīr* which is also used in the sense of 'predestination'. Taking the word in this sense, the verse may also mean here that when man is under creation in his mother's womb, Allah predetermines four things for him: his life span, his sustenance, his deeds and whether he would be miserable or happy [as in the ḥadīth of Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه recorded by Shaikhain].

ثُمَّ السَّبِيلَ يَسَّرَهُ (then He made the way easy for him...80:20) Allah through His consummate wisdom creates man in his mother's womb, creation after creation, within three layers of darkness [i.e. the belly, the womb and the amniotic membrane]. It is kept in a safe place in the belly. The mother in whose belly all this is happening is totally unaware of any of the details of this process. Thereafter, when the baby becomes perfect with all its limbs and organs, Allah made it possible that a body weighing 3 to 4 kg comes out through an extremely narrow passage, and the mother does not suffer unduly. So blessed be He Who is the best Creator!

ثُمَّ أَمَاتَهُ، فَأَقْبَرَهُ (Later, he made him die, and put him into the grave..80:21) After mentioning the inception of human life, Allah points to its end, that is, death and grave. Death has been mentioned here in the context of



blessings of Allah. It indicates that death is a blessing rather than a calamity. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have put it thus: تحفة المومن الموت "The gift of a believer is death." Moreover, there is a profound wisdom in death at macro level for the entire world.

The phrase فاقبره *fa-aqbarah* (and put him into the grave) describes another blessing of Allah, in that when man is dead, he is not left lying on the earth like other animals where he might rot, blow up and burst [and probably be ravaged by vultures or beasts]. But, even after death, he is honoured in the most befitting manner. His body is washed ceremonially, enshrouded in clean cloths, and buried in a grave with respect.

This verse also indicates that it is obligatory to bury a dead human body.

كَلَّا لَمَّا يُقْضَىٰ مَا أَمَرَهُ (No! He has not yet fulfilled what He [Allah] had commanded him...80:23).

Having mentioned in the preceding verses the beginning and the end of human life, Divine Omnipotence and Divine blessings, the current verses warn the non-believing man that the demand of Divine Signs and blessings was to carefully ponder and believe in Allah, and comply with His injunctions, but the unfortunate creature failed to do so. Further, the Divine favours are mentioned that were conferred on man between the beginning and end of his life. Man is then asked to consider the sources of his food. Allah showers down water abundantly from the clouds. He cleaves the earth with new growth. Thereupon He causes grain to grow out of it. At first, a fragile shoot germinates and sprouts. Then many different kinds of grain, fruits and gardens come into existence. Having warned man several times about these Divine blessings, the Sūrah concludes with the mention of Resurrection, thus:

فَإِذَا جَاءَتِ الصَّاحَّةُ ( So when there will come the Deafening Noise...80:33). The word *ṣākhkhah* means 'deafening cry or shout' and it refers to the blowing of the trumpet, which will be a deafening sound.

يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ (the Day when one will flee from his brother...80:34). This depicts the scene when all the people will have gathered in the Plain of Gathering. Each person will be worried about himself, and the

situation will be so horrifying and tense that it will make people heedless of anything around them. In the world, there are relationships between people that make one willing to lay down his life for the other, but on the Day of Resurrection there will be such horror and chaos that they will be unable to take care of anyone. In fact, even if one sees the other in front of him, he will turn away from him. They will try to flee from their brothers, from their mothers and fathers, from their spouses and their children. They will not be able to help any of them in the Hereafter, despite the natural attachment they had with them in the world. Normally, one is more anxious in this world about his parents than about his brothers, and he is more anxious about his wife and children than about his parents. Keeping this in view, the relationships, in the present verse, are arranged from lower order to higher order.

The Chapter ends on a note of warning to disbelievers that if they reject the Qur’ānic message and persist in opposition to the Holy Prophet ﷺ they will have to face a day of reckoning when misery, shame and ignominy will be their lot. The righteous believers, however, will reside in Gardens of Bliss, their faces beaming with joy and happiness.

**Alḥamdulillah**  
**The Commentary on**  
**Sūrah ‘Abas**  
**Ends here**